

**John Connolly to George Washington, September 18, 1772, Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers. Published by the Society of the Colonial Dames of America. Edited by Stanislaus Murray Hamilton.**

**FROM DOCTOR JOHN CONNOLLY. <sup>1</sup>**

PITTSBURGH Septembr. 18th. 1772.

DEAR SIR.

Since I had the pleasure of seeing you here, some apparent favorable Circumstances induced me to Revisit the Western World, & cursorily to feast upon, the various Novelties afforded, in so ample a Speculative Field.—

In my Return from the Illinois I could not refrain from accompanying Majr. Hamilton & the other Gentr. on a Visit to the great Licks, where the ELEPHANT'S Bones render them more particularly Remarkable; & as they were all employed in collecting Curiosities agreeable to their respective inclinations, I just stumbled upon the Tooth I now present you with, begging your Acceptance thereof, as a Testimonial of my Regard for your Person, & those Abilities contributing to the Protection, & formerly to the Reduction of this extensive & valuable Territory.—

As some Account of the place may be (perhaps) satisfactory to yourself, as well as to your Friends, I shall attempt giving you as instructive an Idea of its appearance. Situation & as my confined knowledge may permit, & leave you (Sir) & the interested Enquirers into these abstruse matters to ascertain the true Species of these Animals, the course of their Route into that Country, & suchlike Relative Speculations, as must naturally arise in the

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Breast of the inquisitive, from so extraordinary a PHENOMENON. About twenty five Miles below the great Miamis River, East of the Ohio, & at the entrance of a small Creek you will perceive a Path, which by pursuing Easterly leads you into plainer & larger Roads, untill having continued the same Course a Mile, or perhaps better, you find yourself conducted by a large well beaten Way, thro a most delightfull Country, to the Licks, in my Opinion about four Miles from the Ohio.—

These Licks (so much frequented by Buffaloe at present) are an Assemblage of a Variety of Springs (the head sources of the small Creek already mentioned) tho not currently discharging the Water as generally happens, but slowly oozing thro the Earth it becomes strongly impregnated with nitrous or saline particles & nearly resembles the Washings of a dirty Frazil,<sup>2</sup> communicating a Salt Taste to the Tongue when applied. The Lick particularly where the large Bones are now found, is the most Westerly One; having a high reddish Bank upon the West, in the sides of which you may perceive a number of Bones, of different sizes, variously projecting.—The black Mud forming the Lick, may contain near half an Acre, of a glutinous & oily-like substance, so that unwieldy as these Animals must have been, no doubt became so effectually engulphed, that all attempts to extricate themselves became fruitless, & thus accounts for their general destruction at this place. What confirms me in this Opinion, was my incautiously attempting to run a-cross the Lick, to secure a large Bone on the opposite side, when I found the Way impracticable; being so bogg'd that it was not without Assistance I made my Road back again.—

I discovered an under Jaw very little affected by Time with all the Teeth perfectly secure. This was really a Curiosity, & could not fail giving One an Astonishing Idea of the vast BODY it helped to constitute. An Officer of my Acquaintance earnestly requesting it, I was prevailed upon (tho not without Reluctance) to part with my property—

I have seen Doctor Hunter's Lectures upon some of the Bones sent to the Royal Society by Coll. Croghan & Capt. Gordon; in which He calls them the PSEUDO ELEPHANT & says such are yet found in different parts of Siberia, but rather abruptly concludes, by

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affirming the whole Race to be now extinct. It would be construed presumption in Me to question the Authority of so judicious a Man, however, inconsistent with the general Operations of Nature so extraordinary an Assertion may appear. It is certainly thus far authenticated, that no such Animals are at present found upon the Continent.—I must not omit informing you, for the entertainment of your Philosophic Friends, that about 8 hundred Miles up the MISSOURI River similar Bones have been found, tho' not the appearance of more than One SKELETON. Thus the SPECULATIVE may have some Reason to determine their Course from the Westward. We find that HANNIBAL in his expedition against the ROMANS was particularly delayed in conveying them over the RHONE on his March to ITALY by Bridges &ca. how then these Animals could have passed the Mississippi & Ohio Rivers only, exclusive of looking so far back as a supposed Strait between the Eastern part of Asia & the S. W. parts of this Continent added to the known obnoxiousness of a Northern Clime, will no doubt be puzzling to the most refined Enquirers. These Matters I refer to the more penetrating Researches of inquisitive Investigators, & just beg leave to touch another View.

It is astonishing to me that notwithstanding your Colony of Virginia is honored with a Number of Spirited & enterprizing Gentlemen you have so long neglected an Acquaintance with the true value of this Western Country. I am sensible that the cultivation of Tobacco could be no where more advantageously carried on, than in different parts of West Florida Government; & I am at this present acquainted with large Bodies of Land unappropriated, & excellently adapted to that purpose, open to a Market by a very good, at least tolerable Navigation for Boats of any Burden. Any Association amongst a Number of Your Friends to send down Negroes with proper Managers by the Ohio, would not only laudably promote & encourage the Settlement, but it must also tend to your very great emolument.—I must ask your pardon for thus communicating my unsolicited Opinion, & can only apologize by assuring you, that it proceeds from the great passion I have for facilitating a Settlement in that quarter; which must rise with so many grand Advantages.—The NATCHEZ is now flourishing fast, & as I plainly see what may be effected, I sigh to find

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matters out of my power, & the few Abilities I am possessed of, obscured, by irresistible Necessity urging Me to Pursuits of a different Nature.—I have already exceeded the Bounds of a Letter; I must therefore after requesting your forgiveness for (possibly) intruding upon your Time for Matters of more Moment, beg leave to subscribe myself with much Respect

Dr. Sir your Friend & most obed: Servant JOHN CONNOLLY

N : B Permit me to present my

Compliments to yr. Lady altho I have not the

happiness of her Acquaintance.

1 This letter is thus indorsed by Washington. In a narrative of his imprisonment (Penn. Hist. Mag.) Connolly says, "Though I had obtained a lieutenant-colonel's commission under his Majesty, yet whenever they had occasion to mention me in their resolves and public proceedings, they wrote plain John Connolly, without the least mark of distinction, or affected to call me Doctor, thereby bringing to the remembrance of those who knew me, that it was once intended I should pursue the practice of physic, if that were any disgrace, and insinuating to the world at large, that a Doctor would not have been in such a situation, had he not been a busy factious person." By biographers and historians in general Connolly is referred to as a physician, not a soldier. He came originally from Lancaster Country, Pennsylvania, and afterwards settled in Augusta County, Virginia. He was very active during Dunmore's war, and in the boundary question between Pennsylvania and Virginia. Connolly was a most aggressive loyalist, and was prisoner during all the first part of the Revolutionary War.

2 Anchor ice.